Uncovering the Facts about Adoption, Abortion and Teen Parenthood

Grades 9-12, Lesson 17

Student Learning Objectives

The student will be able to ...

- identify who can legally consent to have an abortion, make an adoption plan and/or choose to parent
- 2. define parenting, adoption, and abortion
- 3. name at least 2 facts about adoption, teen parenthood and abortion

Agenda

- 1. Introduce the lesson.
- 2. Define unplanned pregnancy, adoption, abortion and teen parenthood.
- 3. Do true/false activity with students.
- 4. Summarize activity
- 5. Assign Homework.

This lesson was most recently edited on February 3, 2011.

Materials Needed

Student Materials

- Individual Homework: Thinking about Pregnancy Options (One copy per student)
- Family Homework: Talking about Adoption, Abortion and Teen Parenthood (One copy per student)

Reminder: The English version is on the last page of this lesson plan. You will find the *Family Homework* in English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese and Arabic at www.kingcounty.gov/health/FLASH – click on "Parents & Guardians."

Classroom Materials

- Uncovering the Facts Visuals 1-18, contained in this lesson and also available online as a PowerPoint presentation at www.kingcounty.gov/health/FLASH
- Set of True/False cards for students to hold up in response to statements. You can use index cards or small pieces of paper. Write True in green on one side and False in red on the other side (one classroom set)

Teacher Preparation

Well in advance ...

• If outside of Washington State, review local laws that pertain to minor's access to prenatal care and abortion services. Modify answers and explanations to true/false statements as necessary, www.guttmacher.org is one good resource for this information.

Standards

National Health Education Standard

• Standard 1: Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health

Performance Indicator 1.12.5: Propose ways to reduce or prevent injuries and health problems

Performance Indicator 1.12.6: Analyze the relationship between access to health care and health status.

Washington State Health Education Standard

Essential Academic Learning Requirement (EALR) 2: The student acquires the
knowledge and skills necessary to maintain a healthy life: Recognizes dimensions of
health, recognizes stages of growth and development, reduces health risks, and lives
safely.

Grade Level Expectation (GLE): 2.2.2: Understands how to maintain sexual health throughout life

• Essential Academic Learning Requirement (EALR) 3: The student analyzes and evaluates the impact of real-life influences on health.

Grade Level Expectation (GLE) 3.2.1: Evaluates health and fitness information.

Rationale

Half of all pregnancies in the United States are unplanned, and over 80% of all teen pregnancies are unplanned¹. For teens who find themselves pregnant, all three options available to them carry significant stigma and possibly shame.² This stigma is compounded by massive amounts of misinformation, about adoption and abortion especially.³ Research is clear that when individuals feel coerced or pressured into adoption or abortion, their long-term emotional and physical health suffers.^{4,5} Although there is less available research regarding teens who are pressured or coerced into parenthood, we can assume that there are negative consequences for them as well.

A Pregnancy Options lesson is included in the *FLASH* curriculum to provide factual information about these options to students. Homework assignments are included to allow students to explore their own and their family's (culture's, religion's) values about them. From a philosophical standpoint, we believe that along with information about pregnancy prevention, information about pregnancy options is a fundamental part of a comprehensive sexual health education.

It is important to note that the point of this lesson is not to lead a discussion about the values associated with any of the pregnancy options. This lesson is designed to simply provide factual information regarding a topic about which students are likely to have many questions. If the lesson design is followed, teachers should feel confident to teach this lesson, regardless of their personal beliefs. Nowhere in the lesson is the teacher or any student asked to share personal values.

Finally, from a Public Health perspective, early entry into medical care is vitally important for pregnant women, whether they are continuing their pregnancy or having an abortion. Early prenatal care dramatically improves outcomes for the mother and baby; early access to an abortion is less medically risky for the woman, less costly, and is associated with improved emotional well-being after the procedure. Providing men and women with accurate medical information about all three pregnancy options without shaming or stigmatizing any of the options helps women access the care they need sooner and facilitates their mental well-being after the fact. It is important to note that there is no research suggesting that the experience of making an adoption plan, having an abortion or becoming a teen parent is inherently bad for a woman's mental health. Instead, it is the experience of having been pressured or coerced into the decision that is associated with later poor outcomes, such as a sense of regret, depression, etc.

Activities

Note: Instructions to you are in regular font. A suggested script is in *italics*. Feel free to modify the script to your style and your students' needs.

1. Introduce the lesson.

Today we will be talking about adoption, abortion and teen parenthood. When an individual or a couple learns that a woman is pregnant, especially if they were not expecting to be pregnant, they must make a choice. Will they choose to make an adoption plan, to have an abortion or to become parents? This is a very important decision, and people deserve to have all of the correct information that they need in order to make the best decision they can.

I also want to acknowledge that these are controversial topics – people have a lot of different beliefs about adoption, abortion and teen parenthood. Right here in this class we may have very different beliefs and we may not agree with one another. That's okay. The purpose of today's lesson isn't for us to explore our own values and beliefs, although that is a great thing for people to do. I will be assigning a homework assignment where you can do just that, at home with your family or another trusted adult. The purpose of today's lesson is to give you a chance to learn factual information and get your questions answered about adoption, abortion and teen parenthood.

2. Briefly define and give an overview of unplanned pregnancy, adoption, abortion and teen parenthood.

Student explanations are provided in the teacher script below. Additional information is provided for the teacher below the student explanations, in case there are further questions from your students or you need additional information.

In a few minutes we will do an activity to help you learn more about adoption, abortion and teen parenthood. But first, I want to give you a quick overview of each of the options and of unplanned pregnancy.

Unplanned Pregnancy

An **unplanned pregnancy**, also sometimes called an unintended pregnancy, is a pregnancy that happened on accident. The person who is pregnant may be very happy to be pregnant, or it may be terrible news for them. Either way, it was a surprise. About half of all pregnancies in the U.S. are unintended.

Background information about unplanned pregnancy, to share with students as needed:

- About half of the time a woman with an unintended pregnancy chooses to have an abortion, and about half of the time she chooses to continue the pregnancy.
- Less than 1% of all unintended pregnancies end with the woman making an adoption plan (the actual percentage is .66%).

<u>Adoption</u>

Adoption is when someone becomes the legal parent of a child that is not their biological son or daughter. Adoption is a more common occurrence than many people think; over 2% of all U.S. children are adopted.⁹

Background information about adoption, to share with students as needed:

- The most common type of adoption in the U.S. is when a step-parent adopts the child of their new spouse¹⁰
- Aside from step-parent adoptions, there are three main types of adoption:
 - Adoption of children who have been in foster care
 - Adoption of children whose birth parents decided to make an adoption plan while they were still pregnant
 - Adoption of children from other countries

Abortion

An **abortion** is when a woman ends her pregnancy under a doctor's care. Abortion is the most common surgical procedure performed in the U.S. ¹¹ Almost 25% of all pregnancies in the U.S. end with an abortion. ¹²

Background information about abortion, to share with students as needed:

- There are two kinds of abortion: medical and surgical.
- Medical abortion is when a woman ends her pregnancy by taking a medication that is prescribed to her by a doctor. This type of abortion is for women who have been pregnant for 9 weeks or less.
- Surgical abortion, which is sometimes called an in-clinic abortion, is when a doctor ends a woman's pregnancy by removing the pregnancy tissue from her body with a suctioning machine.

Teen Parenthood

Teen parenthood, is, of course, becoming a parent when you are still a teenager. Approximately 4% of all young women and 2% of all young men become **parents while they are still teenagers**. ^{13,14,15} Many more will become pregnant but will not choose to become parents. ¹⁶

Background information about teen parenthood, to share with students as needed:

- Over 80% of all teen pregnancies were unplanned.
- Babies born to teenage women are more likely to be born early or be too small when they are born.¹⁷
- Men and women who become parents while they are teenagers face unique challenges, and may have more difficulty finishing high school, attending college, or earning enough money to support themselves and their family later in life.¹⁸

3. Facilitate a True/False activity to dispel misinformation regarding abortion, adoption and parenting.

Let students know that for the remainder of the class period they will be playing a true/false "game" about pregnancy options. Hand out the True and False cards, and explain the game to them. You will read a statement out loud, and they should hold up the appropriate card based on whether they believe the statement to be true or false. After you see everyone's card, you will tell them the answer and read a brief explanation. Additional information is

provided for the teacher below selected questions, in case there are further questions from your students or you need additional information. Statements for the true/false game are provided below, as visuals at the end of this lesson, and as a PowerPoint presentation available online at www.kingcounty.gov/health/FLASH.

A sample explanation is provided for each statement. For some statements, additional information is included in a text box just below the explanation – this is to assist teachers in answering student's questions – it is not necessary to read all of the information in the text boxes.

True/False Statements:

- 1) Only about 1,000 children are adopted each year in the United States. (False)
 Explanation: Actually, more than 80,000 children are adopted in the United States each year. There are currently 1.5 million adopted children in the United States, more than 2% of all children. On the United States are than 2% of all children.
- 2) <u>Most families who adopt children do so because they are infertile that is, they cannot get pregnant. (False)</u>
 Explanation: *Although many families do choose adoption for this reason, over half of*
- 3) Most adopted children were adopted when they were babies. (False)
 Explanation: Approximately 14,000 infants are adopted each year because the birth mother voluntary chooses to make an adoption plan for the baby. Most children are actually adopted from foster care, and are usually not babies when they are adopted.
 - 17% of all adoptions involve birth mothers making an adoption plan while still pregnant.
 - 15% of children are adopted into the U.S. from another country

U.S. families with adopted children also include birth or stepchildren.²¹

- 68% are adopted out of foster care.²²
- 4) <u>If a woman chooses adoption for her baby, she needs to get written permission from the person she got pregnant with.</u> (True)

Explanation: The person a woman got pregnant with is the biological father of the baby, and if he can be located, he must give his permission to make an adoption plan.

The biological father must sign a "consent to adoption," stating that he agrees with the choice to make an adoption plan. Another option is for him to sign a "denial of paternity," which means that he does not believe he is the biological father, or he does not want to be considered as the biological father. After he signs a "denial of paternity" form he does not have any parental rights or responsibilities for the child.²³

5) <u>If someone decides to plan for an adoption, they can pick the family that adopts their</u> baby, if they want to (True)

Explanation: Almost all adoptions today work this way – they are called "open adoptions."

In an open adoption, the birth mother or birth parents are able to choose the family who will adopt the baby, and they are able to have ongoing contact with the baby after he or she is adopted. Some people send letters and pictures, while other people have regular in-person visits.²⁴

6) It is legal to buy someone's baby, as long as everyone involved agrees to it (False) Explanation: Although birth parents are sometimes reimbursed for costs associated with the pregnancy, adoptive parents do not ever "buy" the baby.

Adoption is a legal process, and there are many laws that govern it. Individuals who wish to adopt must work with an adoption agency or an adoption lawyer.

7) Most abortions only take 5 or 10 minutes, even though the woman is usually in the clinic for 2 to 3 hours. (True)

Explanation: The surgical abortion procedure takes about 5-10 minutes. The appointment is much longer, including time for paperwork, preparation, and time to rest afterwards.²⁵

- Surgical abortion procedure, also called vacuum aspiration, takes about 5-10 minutes. The entire appointment takes 3-4 hours, including time for paperwork, preparation, and time to rest afterwards.²⁶
- Some women may chose to have a medical abortion, where their pregnancy is ended by medications they take. This process happens slowly over one or more days in a woman's home or other location.²⁷
- 8) If a woman has an abortion, she is more likely to have a miscarriage later in life. (False) Explanation: Women who have an abortion, or even several abortions, are no more likely to have a miscarriage than women who have never had an abortion.
 - Abortions performed in the first trimester pose virtually no long-term risk of such problems as infertility, ectopic pregnancy, miscarriage or birth defect.²⁸
 - There is no association between abortion and breast cancer or any other type of cancer.²⁹
 - Abortion does not pose a hazard to women's mental health.³⁰
- 9) If a woman in Washington State can't afford to have an abortion, she can apply for Medical Coupons, which will pay for it. (True)

Explanation: Currently in Washington State, women who are pregnant and don't make much money can apply for free Medicaid insurance that will pay for abortion. It will also pay for prenatal care if a woman is planning on continuing her pregnancy and becoming a parent.

- State medical coverage for pregnancy and abortion varies from state to state.
- To see current guidelines for coverage in Washington State, visit: http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/personal/insurance/pregnant.aspx
- In Washington, teens qualify for coverage based on their own income, not the income of their parents or other adults they are living with.
- To find information about other states, visit <u>www.guttmacher.org</u> and/or www.nnaf.org

10) <u>If a woman wants to have an abortion, she needs to get written permission from the person she got pregnant with. (False)</u>

Explanation: In Washington State a pregnant woman or teenager does not have to have permission from anyone to receive an abortion. This includes the person she got pregnant with, her parents, or her husband or boyfriend.

11) Most women end up waiting until pretty late in their pregnancy to have an abortion. (False)

Explanation: The overwhelming majority of abortions are performed in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy

- 88% of all abortions are performed before the first 12 weeks. 31
- Many women (58%) wish they could have had their abortions earlier. 32
- Most of the women who wanted their abortion earlier said they were delayed by trying to raise the money.³³
- Teens are more likely than older women to delay having an abortion until after 15
 weeks of pregnancy, when the medical risks associated with abortion are higher.³⁴
- 12) There is a pill you can buy at the store that makes you have an abortion. (False)
 Explanation: There are two pills that people sometimes get confused with each other.
 One [hold up one finger] is prescribed by a doctor for a woman who wants a "medical abortion." She can only get this pill from a doctor it cannot just be bought in a store.
 The other pill [hold up a second finger] called Emergency Contraception (the most well-known brand is Plan B -- is a special birth control pill that can be taken after sex.
 Plan B does not cause an abortion, just helps to prevent a pregnancy. Anyone who is 17 or older can buy this pill at the store, and they do not need a prescription from a doctor.
- 13) If a woman is pregnant and wants to give birth, her boyfriend or parents can legally make her have an abortion or adoption instead. (False)

 Explanation: No one can force a woman to have an abortion or make an adoption plan. She does not need anyone's permission to become a parent.
- 14) Most teenage women who are pregnant do not see the doctor as often as they should. (False)

Explanation: Most teenage women do receive adequate prenatal care. However, it is true that more teens receive late prenatal care or no prenatal care at all compared with women who are not teenagers.³⁵

- 15) Three of the best things a woman can do to have a healthy pregnancy are to not smoke, not drink alcohol, and go to the doctor or midwife regularly. (True)

 Explanation: Exposure to drugs and alcohol very dangerous to the developing fetus, and can cause birth defects or miscarriage. Women who visit the doctor regularly during their pregnancy are more likely to deliver healthy, full-term babies.³⁶
- 16) <u>The basic responsibilities of parenthood include providing children with food, shelter, clothing, healthcare and education, and protecting their children from abuse and neglect.</u> (True)

Explanation: Parents are legally responsible for their children's physical health and well-being, and for ensuring their access to an education. Parents who do not provide a safe environment for their children may be taken to court and may even have their children removed from their care.

Note: Should you care to deepen this discussion, you could consider asking a discussion question such as: Of course, being a parent involves more than just meeting you child's basic needs. What are some things you think people can do to be really good parents to their child?

17) <u>Becoming a parent is the leading cause of dropping out of school among teen girls.</u>

(True)

Explanation: Only 40 percent of young teen mothers graduate from high school, compared to about 75% of women who delayed their first birth to at least age 21.³⁸

Teens who do not complete high school have an unemployment rate of approximately 50% during their teens and early 20's - meaning that at any given time only half of them are able to find work. That is twice the rate of their peers who graduated from high school, and five times the rate of their peers who graduated college. In 2007, the average annual earnings for young adults who had dropped out of high school was \$8,358. Young people under 25 who had completed college earned \$24,797. 39

18) 8 out of 10 teen mothers do not marry the father of their first child. However, these dads are still able to pay enough child support to help the mom and baby get by. (False) Explanation: It's true that 8 out of 10 teen moms do not marry the father of their first child. However, these fathers usually pay very little child support, often because they are quite poor themselves. 40

Teen fathers who do not live with their children pay an average of \$800 annually in child support. Teen fathers earn less during their lifetime than their peers who did not have children until they were at least 21.⁴¹ This may be because they too drop out of high school, because of the impact parenthood on their life, or because of some other factor we do not understand.

4. Summarize activity

You all did a great job today – I appreciate that you were able to talk about such sensitive topics in a respectful way, and I hope that you all learned some new information. Because these are topics that people have such strong feelings about, I want to make sure that you get a chance to explore your own values about adoption, abortion and teen parenting. Both the individual and the family homework options will give you the chance to do that. Please return your confirmation slip or your completed individual homework by _____ for full credit.

5. Assign Homework

- a. Individual Homework: Thinking about Pregnancy Options
- b. Family Homework: Talking about Adoption, Abortion and Teen Parenthood
 Reminder: The English version is on the last page of this lesson plan. You will find the
 Family Homework in English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese and Arabic at
 www.kingcounty.gov/health/FLASH click on "Parents & Guardians."

Related Activities for Integrated Learning

MATH

Using the following information, have students calculate the raw numbers for a specific geographic area; in your city or state, for example. Students will need to research to discover the population numbers for your area, or, alternatively, you may provide them.

- Half of all pregnancies are unintended. About half of the time a woman with an
 unintended pregnancy chooses to have an abortion, and about half of the time she
 chooses to continue the pregnancy.
- .66% of all unintended pregnancies end with the woman making an adoption plan.

Research to find the pregnancy rate for the current or previous year in your area. Based on the above information, answer the following questions:

- Of all the pregnancies in your area, how many pregnancies were likely unintended?
- How many pregnancies resulted in a birth? How many were ended by abortion?
- How many women chose to make an adoption plan?

CIVICS

Have students conduct a research project about minor's rights to maternal and reproductive health services in your state. Students will need to access relevant law and will likely need to interview professionals to gather complete and accurate information. Make sure the report addresses the following questions.

- Do minors need the permission of their parent or guardian to access any of the following services:
 - Annual sexual health exam
 - Birth control
 - STD testing
 - STD treatment

- Abortion
- Prenatal care
- · Adoption counseling
- Making an adoption plan
- Are there any legal requirements, besides age, to accessing an abortion? Consider the following:
 - Waiting period
 - Limit on gestational age (weeks of pregnancy)
 - Need permission of parent, spouse, or person she got pregnant with
 - · Mandatory counseling
 - Other
- Are there any legal requirements, besides age, to making an adoption plan? Consider the following:
 - Waiting period
 - Limit on gestational age (weeks of pregnancy)
 - Need permission of parent, spouse, or person she got pregnant with
 - Mandatory counseling
 - Other
- Are there laws in place that support teen parents? Are there laws in place that are restrictive or cumbersome to teen parents?
- Are there "safe haven" laws in your state related to infant abandonment?

Only about 1,000 children are adopted each year in the United States.

Most families who adopt children do so because they are infertile – that is, they cannot get pregnant.

Most adopted children were adopted when they were babies.

If a woman chooses adoption for her baby, she needs to get written permission from the person she got pregnant with.

If someone decides to plan for an adoption, they can pick the family that adopts their baby, if they want to.

It is legal to buy someone's baby, as long as everyone involved agrees to it.

Most abortions only take 5 or 10 minutes, even though the woman is usually in the clinic for 2 to 3 hours.

If a woman has an abortion, she is more likely to have a miscarriage later in life.

If a woman in Washington State can't afford to have an abortion, she can apply for Medical Coupons, which will pay for it.

If a woman wants to have an abortion, she needs to get written permission from the person she got pregnant with.

Most women end up waiting until pretty late in their pregnancy to have an abortion.

Uncovering the Facts, Visual 12

There is a pill you can buy at the store that makes you have an abortion.

If a woman is pregnant and wants to give birth, her boyfriend or parents can legally make her have an abortion or adoption instead.

Most teenage women who are pregnant do not see the doctor as often as they should.

Three of the best things a woman can do to have a healthy pregnancy are to not smoke, not drink alcohol, and go to the doctor or midwife regularly. The basic responsibilities of parenthood include providing children with food, shelter, clothing, healthcare and education, and protecting their children from abuse and neglect.

Becoming a parent is the leading cause of dropping out of school among teen girls.

Eight out of ten teen mothers do not marry the father of their first child. However, these dads are still able to pay enough child support to help the mom and baby get

Individual Homework: Thinking About Pregnancy Options

Please respond to the following statements, stating whether you agree or disagree and providing 3 reasons why you feel this way.

1.	Abortion is always wrong because it's ending a potential life.	
2.	It's unfair for a child to have a parent who is a teen because they are aren't fini growing and maturing themselves.	shed
3.	Adoption is unfair to the baby and too hard for the birth parents.	

Family Homework:

Talking About Adoption, Abortion and Teen Parenthood

All Family Homework is optional. You may complete an Individual Homework assignment instead.

PURPOSE: This is a chance to share with one another some of your own (and your family's, your religion's) beliefs about sexuality and relationships. It will also give you a chance to get to know one another a little better.

DIRECTIONS: Find a quiet place where the two of you – the student and the trusted adult (parent, guardian, stepparent, adult friend of the family, best friend's parent, etc.) – can talk privately. Set aside about 10 minutes. During this time, please give full attention to one another ... no texting, watching TV and so on.

Now ask one another the following questions, with the understanding that:

- You are each welcome to say, "That one is too private. Let's skip it."
- What you discuss will not be shared with anyone else, even within the family, unless you give one another permission to share it.
- It's OK to feel silly or awkward and it's important to try the homework anyway. We recommend that you take turns asking questions. When it is your turn to listen, really try to understand the other person's response.

ASK EACH OTHER:

- Under what circumstances, if any, do you believe it is a good decision for a teenager to become a parent?
- Under what circumstances, if any, do you believe it is a good decision for a teenager to have an abortion?
- Under what circumstances, if any, do you believe it is a good decision for a teenager to make an adoption plan?

Note to teachers: There is no homework for lessons 14-16, 18-22. This is for lesson 17. Family Homework: Talking about Adoption, Abortion & Teen Parenthood – Confirmation Slip			
FOR FULL	CREDIT, THIS HOMEWORK IS DUE:		
We have completed this	s Homework Exercise.		
Date:	student's signature		
	signature of family member or trusted adult		

Public Health - Seattle & King County ■ @1988; revised 2011 ■ www.kingcounty.gov/health/flash

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